

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 145285

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ORIGIN NEA-04

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /005 R

DRAFTED BY NEA/INS:RDLORTON:JET

APPROVED BY NEA/INS:DHKUX

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R 051843Z JUL 74

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

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FOL REPEAT NEW DELHI 8889 SENT ACTION SECSTATE
INFO DACCA ISLAMABAD LONDON BOMBAY CALCUTTA
MADRAS JULY 03

QTE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE NEW DELHI 8889

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, IN, PK, BG

SUBJECT: INDIAN REACTION TO BHUTTO'S VISIT TO DACCA

SUMMARY: PUBLICLY INDIA PRESENTS THE FAILURE OF THE DACCA TALKS
BETWEEN BHUTTO AND SHEIKH MUJIB AS AN OPPORTUNITY MISSED, FOR
WHICH IT BLAMES BHUTTO. PRIVATELY, THE GOI EXPECTED AT LEAST
ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS FROM THE VISIT. IT IS PROBABLY
SOMEWHAT RELIEVED BY THE HARD LINE BANGLADESH TOOK WITH PAKISTAN.
BUT IT MAY ALSO BE MILDLY CONCERNED THAT PAKISTAN ISN'T GOING
TO HELP RESOLVE SOME OF BANGLADESH'S ECONOMIC PROBLEMS AND THAT
INTERNAL PROBLEMS MAY BE REDUCING PAKISTANI NEGOTIATING FLEXIBI-
LITY. END SUMMARY

1. THE GOI HAS PLAYED BHUTTO'S VISIT TO DACCA IN LOW KEY.
THE FOREIGN MINISTRY APPARENTLY REFAINED FROM MUCH COMMENT.

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PAGE 02 STATE 145285

AN ALL INDIA RADIO COMMENTARY NOTED THE DISAPPOINTMENT OF PEOPLE

OF ALL THREE COUNTRIES, WHO "HAVE BEEN HOPING FOR A SPEEDLY RESTORATION OF NORMALCY IN THE SUBCONTINENT." IT WENT ON TO BLAME BHUTTO AND TO REPORT THE BANGLADESH POSITION.

2. THE HEAD OF THE PAKISTAN DIVISION OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY HAD TOLD US BEFORE TH VISIT THAT WHILE HE EXPECTED NO AGREEMENTS ON BIHARI REPATRIATION OR DIVISION OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES, HE THOUGHT THAT BANGLADESH AND PAKISTAN WOULD PROBABLY AGREE TO ESTABLISH DIPOLMATIC RELATIONS. HE WAS ONE OF THOSE CITICAL OF BENGALEE "SOFTNESS" IN NEGOTIATING WITH PAKISTAN DURING THE TRIPARTITE TALKS IN APRIL, AND SHOULD HAVE BEEN FAVORABLY IMPRESSED BY THE BENGALEE TOUGHNESS THIS TIME.

3. THE GOI HAS ALWAYS MAINTAINED THAT PAKISTAN-BANGLADESH REALATIONS ARE THE CONCERN OF THOSE TWO COUNTRIES, AND THAT INDIA DOESN'T CARE IF THOSE RELATIONS DEVELOP MORE RAPIDLY THAN PAKISTAN-INDIA RELATIONS. THE INDIAN EXPRESS REPEATS THIS VIEW JULY 2. AT THE SAME TIME, INDIAN OFFICIALS MUST HAVE WORRIED ABOUT THE PROSPECT OF DRAMATIC PROGRESS IN PAKISTAN-BANGLADESH RELATIONS WHILE INDIA-PAKISTAN RELATIONS REMAINED COMPLETELY STALLED FOLLOWING THE INDIAN NUCLEAR EXPLOSION. ELEMENTS IN INDIA SEE BHUTTO AS TRYING TO "DRIVE A WEDGE" BETWEEN INDIA AND BANGLADESH. THEY ALSO DRAW ATTENTION TO THE PRO-PAKISTAN (AND ANTI-INDIAN) SYMPATHIES OF ELEMENTS WITHIN BANGLADESH. SUCH INDIANS UNDOUBTEDLY HEAVED A SIGH OF RELIEF AS BHUTTO LEFT DACCA EMPTY-HANDED.

4. CONVERSELY, INDIAN OFFICIALS IN THE PAST HAVE SUGGESTED THAT RESUMPTION OF BANGLADESH-PAKISTAN TRADE MIGHT RELIEVE THE ECONOMIC SITUATION IN BANGLADESH AND THEREFORE EASE SOME OF TH ANTI-INDIAN FEELING THERE. THOSE OFFICIALS WILL BE CONCERNED ABOUT THE FAILURE OF BHUTTO AND SHEIKH MUJIB TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT TRADE. A BANGLADESH HIGH COMMISSION OFFICER CONFIRMED THIS VIEW TO US JULY 2, ADDING THAT THE FAILURE OF THE VISIT MIGHT INDIRECTLY INCREASE ANTI-INDIAN FEELING IN BANGLADESH.

5. FOREIGN MINISTRY DEPUTY SECRETARY (PAKISTAN) TOLD EMBOFF JULY 2 HE THOUGHT PAKITANI UNWILLINGNESS TO COMPROMISE IN DACCA WAS RELATED TO BHUTTO'S DIFFICULTIES AT HOME. ACCORDING TO THIS OFFICIAL, IF THESE DIFFICULTIES HAD REDUCED BHUTTO'S LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 STATE 145285

ROOM TO MANEUVER IN DACCA, THEY MIGHT SIMILARLY MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR HIM TO NEGOTIATE WITH INDIA, EVEN ON TECHNICAL ISSUES SUCH AS RESUMPTION OF TRAVEL AND COMMUNICATIONS.

6. THE HEAD OF THE BANGLADESH DIVISIO OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY PROFESSED TO THE POLITICAL COUNSLEOR JULY 3 THAT HE HAD NO IDEA WHAT SHEIKH MUJIB WOULD DO NOW ABOUT PAKISTAN OR WHAT THE SHEIKH'S FALL BACK POSITION WAS. SHRUGGING HIS SHOULDERS, HE SAID HE

DIDN'T SEE WHY THE SHEIKH SHOULD BE IN ANY HURRY TO REACH
AGREEMENT WITH BHUTTO.

7. PRESS REACTION: THE INDIAN PRESS RANGES FROM MILDLY
TO STRONGLY CRITICAL OF BHUTTO. THE INDIAN EXPRESS, HINDUSTAN
TIMES AND NATIONAL HERALD SOUND NOTES OF MILD REGRET.
THE MILITANT NATIONALIST MOTHERLAND CITES BENGALIAN FIRMNESS
AS AN EXAMPLE FOR INDIA IN ITS RELATIONS WITH PAKISTAN. (THE
MOTHERLAND HAD EARLIER REPORTED THAT BHUTTO GOT A LARGER TURNOUT
AND MORE CHEERS THAN HAD INDIAN PRESIDENT GANDHI ON HIS RECENT
VISIT TO DACCAL.).
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS ESTABLISHMENT, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, CHIEF OF STATE VISITS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 05 JUL 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: shawdg
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974STATE145285
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: RDLORTON:JET
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740179-0904
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740772/aaaacjnf.tel
Line Count: 130
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: shawdg
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 25 JUN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <25 JUN 2002 by boyleja>; APPROVED <21 FEB 2003 by shawdg>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: INDIAN REACTION TO BHUTTO'S VISIT TO DACCA SUMMARY: PUBLICLY INDIA PRESENTS THE FAILURE OF THE DACCA TALKS
TAGS: PFOR, OVIP, IN, PK, BG, (BHUTTO, ALI)
To: KATHMANDU COLOMBO
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005